United Nations

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council is briefed by IAEA Director-General and Special Commission Chairman on third inspection of Iraq's nuclear sites.

- Return of Kuwaiti gold seized by Iraq to begin next Monday.

- Organization of African Unity (OAU) announces candidates for post of United Nations Secretary-General.

- Fifty-seven projects eliminated from Operation Salam Programme in Afghanistan due to lack of resources.

- Democratic People's Republic of Korea puts forward new proposal for nuclear-free zone on Korean peninsula.

- Economic and Social Council concludes current session in Geneva; admits Israel to Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

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The Security Council today was briefed by the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Hans Blix, and the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission overseeing the inspection and destruction or removal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, Rolf Ekeus.

Council members were informed of the findings of the third IAEA inspection team, which concluded that "the possibility exists that there are still undeclared locations with sensitive equipment and material" in Iraq, and that the full extent of Iraq's enrichment programme has not yet been disclosed.

Mr. Blix reported on what he called two important matters -- the action of the IAEA Board of Governors to condemn Iraq for non-compliance with its safeguards agreement, and the Agency's plan for future ongoing monitoring and verification in Iraq, as called for by Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

The Director-General told Council members that for the time being, the phase of immediate on-site inspection would continue, adding that it would be

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"premature" to submit any final proposal for future ongoing monitoring and verification at this time. (The Secretary-General's 120-day deadline for submitting a plan for the long-term verification of Iraq's disarmament comes up this Friday, 2 August.)

Mr. Blix also told the Council that a permanent inspection presence in Iraq may be necessary in the future to allow inspections on short notice.

At a press conference following the consultations, Mr. Ekeus said work had not been concluded yet on a report on the long-term monitoring and verification of Iraq's missiles, chemical and biological weapons. He added that the plan, which would be ready by 1 Agust, would probably be "very stringent and very intrusive".

The fourth IAEA inspection team has arrived in Iraq and is scheduled to stay through next week.

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A United Nations spokesman announced today that a total of 3,216 gold bricks are to be turned over to Kuwait through a special United Nations team on the Iraqi-Saudi Arabian border starting next Monday, 5 August.

The information was received from J. Richard Foran, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, who is responsible for overseeing the return of seized Kuwaiti property. Mr. Foran reported from Paris that specific understandings on the return of gold, banknotes and currency -- that cluster being one of four priority areas identified by the Kuwaitis -- had been reached only last week. Civilian aircraft, museum pieces and national library property are considered other priority areas for return.

The spokesman said the transfer of the gold would involve weighing the bricks, which would be done by two experts from the National Bank of Austria. About 300 of the bricks, each weighing 12.5 kilograms, or about 30 pounds, could be processed each day. After the return of the gold, the banknotes and coins would be dealt with, although there were still some discrepancies to be cleared up concerning these. The matter of museum pieces and library property would be taken up only after the gold, banknotes and coins had been dispensed with, due to the shortage of United Nations manpower.

The spokesman told correspondents that Mr. Foran had reported that only one civilian aircraft remained intact following coalition bombing, and that the HS-125 would be returned in the coming days.

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The Organization of African Unity (OAU) today announced its candidates for the post of United Nations Secretary-General. The current second term of Javier Pérez de Cuéllar expires on 31 December. A special Ad Hoc Committee of OAU, which met today in Abuja, Nigeria, put forth the following candidates for the positive consideration of the Security Council and, subsequently, the

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General Assembly: Boutros Boutros Ghali of Egypt; Bernard Chidzero of Zimbabwe; Kenneth K.S. Dadzie of Ghana; James O.C. Jonah of Sierra Leone; Owono Nguema of Gabon; and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria.

In a press release issued at United Nations Headquarters, the OAU Committee said it was fully convinced that the aspirants were all eminently qualified and possessed the "necessary professionalism, competence and experience" for the position of Secretary-General.

On behalf of OAU, the Committee appealed to the international community to give an opportunity to an African to serve in the highest position of the world Organization.

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Fifty-seven projects from the Operation Salam Programme for 1991 have been either abandoned or scaled down because of lack of resources, it was announced today. The Programme's budget for 1991, originally set at $136 million, has also been cut by $31 million, to $105 million.

In a statement to mark the release of the Operation Salam Progress Report, Benon Sevan, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan and Administrator of Operation Salam, said that "with no immediate end in sight to the conflict in this sorely troubled country, as well as with developments and compelling humanitarian needs in other parts of the world", the international community had become increasingly immune to the war in Afghanistan and the suffering of its people.

According to Mr. Sevan, some major donors have indicated that they will not commit substantial new funds to help the Afghan people until there is progress in the search for a peaceful settlement. Drawing attention to wide support by many Afghan leaders, groups and all the Governments concerned for the Secretary-General's statement on Afghanistan, in which he identified the elements that would serve as a basis for a political settlement, Mr. Sevan suggested that donors reconsider their position and commit new resources to relieve the desperate situation of the Afghan people.

Mr. Sevan stressed that pledges were still needed for an additional $26 million in cash, along with substantial in-kind contributions, including 15,000 metric tons of wheat and other food items.

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The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has put forward a new proposal for a nuclear-free zone on the Korean peninsula.

At a press conference at United Nations Headquarters today, the Permanent Observer of that country, Ambassador Pak Gil Yon, outlined his Government's new proposal. He said there was a possibility of turning the Korean peninsula into a nuclear-free zone now that the nuclear-weapon States, "which consider the Korean peninsula their operational theatre for a nuclear showdown", were

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moving from confrontation to cooperation and reaching agreements on the reduction of these weapons.

The new proposal calls for the adoption of a joint declaration by the two Koreas on the establishment of a nuclear-free zone, and sets terms for its legal effect no later than the end of December 1992.

The Ambassador said the joint declaration would provide for a ban on testing, manufacturing and possession of nuclear weapons by both parties, as well as the prohibition of the development and passage of nuclear weapons, and nuclear military exercises in the nuclear-free zone. The proposal also calls for verification of the absence of these weapons through inspections of the north and south.

By the proposal, the United States, the Soviet Union and China -- the nuclear-weapon States neighbouring the Korean peninsula -- would guarantee nuclear-free status to that peninsula and remove all "factors contravening the nuclear-free status" of the region. The proposal specifies that the United States, "the party which has deployed its nuclear weapons in south Korea", must take measures to withdraw these weapons within one year after the declaration of the nuclear-free zone.

The Ambassador said his Government's new proposal was of "weighty importance" in the elimination of the nuclear threat against his country and in strengthening the system of nuclear non-proliferation on the Korean peninsula. It would also make a substantial contribution to consolidating peace and security in Asia and the world.

Both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea have recently requested United Nations membership. Ambassador Pak said today that his country would pursue disarmament efforts in an expanded manner once its membership of the United Nations was approved.

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The Economic and Social Council has admitted Israel as a member of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The decision was taken by a vote of 32 in favour to 13 against, with 5 abstentions as the Council wound up its current session in Geneva.

While the representative of Israel welcomed the resolution, saying it could be a shot in the arm to the current peace process, the representative of Libya, speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said approving the request was tantamount to rewarding Israel's intransigence and belligerence.

In another action, the Council called for increased assistance to the Palestinian people in the wake of the Gulf crisis. By a vote of 48 in favour, to 1 against (United States), with no abstentions, the Council recommended that the General Assembly request the international community to increase assistance to the Palestinian people in close cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

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Explaining the only negative vote, the representative of the United States said the resolution implied Palestinian statehood and did not deal adequately with current problems.

During its month-long session, the Council took action on a wide range of other social and economic issues, including the growing problem of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). It called on the international community to coordinate efforts with the World Health Organization (WHO) in implementing the global strategy for the prevention and control of AIDS; and requested the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to mobilize moral, technical and financial resources to combat the disease.

In a separate action, the Council reiterated its call to transnational corporations to stop operations in South Africa. Noting the evolving situation in that country, including the repeal of the major apartheid laws, the Council urged the South African regime to make the eradication of apartheid "lasting and equitable". The Council vote was 30 in favour to 9 against, with 10 abstentions.

In another decision, the Council welcomed the measures taken by the Secretary-General to coordinate the activities of the United Nations system in response to the Chernobyl nuclear accident and to convene a pledging conference on 20 September.

With respect to the critical humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa, where an estimated 30 million people are at risk of starvation, the Council appealed to the international community to respond generously and promptly to the Secretary-General's appeals. The Council called on Governments and other concerned parties to allow full access to, and protection of, the international relief and development organizations and agencies, as well as the non-governmental organizations concerned.

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